

MEETING MINUTES

Finance Committee

April 22, 2009

CALL TO ORDER

Time – 7:00 P.M.

Members in attendance: Chairman Joanne F. Marden, Tim Felter, S. Jon Stumpf, Mary O'Donoghue, Cindy Milne, Richard T. Howe, Mark Merritt, Paul Fortier and Stephen Stapinski.
Also present: Anthony J. Torrisi, Finance Director

WARRANT ARTICLE VOTES

Committee members took the following votes on warrant articles at this meeting:

Article 15 – Insurance Recovery Transfer

Tim Felter moved and Stephen Stapinski seconded to recommend approval of Article 15 as written. The motion passed unanimously 9-0.

Article 48 – Parking Program

Cindy Milne moved and Paul Fortier seconded to recommend approval of Article 48 as written. The motion passed unanimously 9-0.

Article 52 – Repairs to Private Ways

Tim Felter moved and Mark Merritt seconded to recommend approval of Article 52 as written. The motion passed unanimously 9-0.

Article 4 – FY2010 Operating Budget

Committee members reviewed Article 4 line items and after lengthy discussion voted to approve Article 4. Mary O'Donoghue questioned approval of Article 4 citing concern that employee pay raises would be included. Committee members concurred with Ms. O'Donoghue but felt they should keep that in mind for next year's budget. Tim Felter moved and Jon Stumpf seconded to recommend approval of Article 4 for a total budget number of \$129,585.992. The motion passed unanimously 9-0.

Article 5 – FY2010 Capital Projects Fund Appropriation

Ms. Marden distributed a list of Town and School CIP projects titled PAY AS YOU GO CIP. After review, Tim Felter moved and Jon Stumpf seconded to recommend approval of Article 5 for the revised amount of \$1,332,000 down from the original amount of \$1,780,000. The motion passed unanimously 9-0.

Article 8 – Free Cash

Mary O'Donoghue moved and Mark Merritt seconded to recommend approval of Article 8 in the amount of zero dollars of Free Cash to be used for the FY2010 Operating Budget. The motion passed unanimously 9-0.

Article 10 – Accumulated Employee Benefit Account

It was moved and seconded to recommend approval of Article 10 in the amount of zero dollars. The motion passed unanimously 9-0.

Article 47 – Post Office Lease

Subsequent to a discussion regarding leasing of property and possible alternative uses for the Town House building, Committee members voted to recommend approval of Article 47 with the understanding that the Finance Committee would discuss intent of the building use with the Town Manager. The motion passed 8-1-0.

Article 49 – Sewer Expansion – Chester St., Mitton Cir., Oak St. and parts of Tewksbury St.

Cindy Milne moved and Tim Felter seconded to recommend approval of Article 49 as written. The motion passed unanimously 9-0.

Article 66 – Priority Development Site

Dick Howe moved and Mark Merritt seconded to recommend approval of Article 66 as written. The motion passed 9-0.

The meeting ended with a brief discussion regarding suggestions for this year's Finance Committee Report.

NEXT MEETING

Regular Finance Committee Meeting (Tentative)
Monday, April 27, 2009
2nd Floor Conference Room
7:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT – 9:55 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carolyn Lynch
Recording Secretary

MEETING MINUTES

Finance Committee

April 15, 2009

CALL TO ORDER

Time – 6:00 P.M.

Members in attendance: Chairman Joanne F. Marden, S. Jon Stumpf, Mary O'Donoghue, Cindy Milne, Richard T. Howe, Mark Merritt, Paul Fortier and Stephen Stapinski.

Also present: Anthony J. Torrisi, Finance Director, and Town Manager Reginald Stapczynski

CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF BUDGET ISSUES

The Town Manager was asked to join tonight's meeting to answer Committee questions regarding current budget issues. The following issues were discussed:

Cell Tower – Police Chief Pattullo was reported to have told the Finance Committee liaison that no further income would be forthcoming from the cell tower and that he would be able to achieve budget cuts as noted in the Town Manager's Budget.

Retirement Incentives – The Town Manager reported that all departments are investigating retirements as one way to relieve their budgets. He added the Town is seeing a slow down in retirements, most likely due to decreases to retirement funds.

State Budget – Mr. Stapczynski reported that the House Ways & Means delivered their budget. He told Committee members that the Quinn Bill was adversely affected. Brief discussion followed. The Town Manager added that it was still early in the budget process and that the Town should have more information the following month at which time adjustments could be made. He raised the possibility that a Special Town Meeting may be necessary. In addition, Mr. Torrisi stated that the Town is currently working diligently with unions and department heads in order to close revenue deficits.

Free Cash – Mr. Stapczynski suggested using the CIP Fund instead of Free Cash for operating budgets. Discussion followed including the option of covering the SPED deficit with Free Cash. All were in agreement that this would have to be discussed with the School Superintendent and School Committee before consensus could be reached.

Accumulated Employee Benefit – The Town is looking at options to lower the amount.

There was a brief discussion on how to fund articles not funded by Free Cash. It was noted that several options currently being discussed by department heads included a 1% decrease in pay for union members, non-paid furloughs and retirement incentives. It was also noted that past early retirement programs had proved not to be advantageous to the Town. The Finance Committee voiced opposition to that option.

Transportation Costs – There was some discussion regarding putting caps on the bidding process. Committee members voiced agreement with this option. However, Mr. Stapinski countered that the level of service was the problem, not necessarily the RFP.

Ms. Marden asked Committee members if they were comfortable with voting for the School Budget without seeing budget details. All agreed not at this time.

Public Works – Discussion on three unresolved budget issues: Solid Waste, Street Lighting and Snow & Ice Removal. Mr. Stapczynski reported that Public Works along with National Grid, were currently analyzing neighborhoods for decreased street lighting. He acknowledged that his charge is to find an additional \$100,000 in savings for the Street Lighting FY2011 Budget. Mr. Stapczynski also informed Committee members that there would be a savings of \$30,000 to \$40,000 in the Trash request for FY2010. After a brief discussion, Committee members expressed interest in mandatory recycling. Ms. Marden noted that after reviewing Snow & Ice Removal costs for the past five years, she felt that this budget had been unfairly characterized relative to the behavior of the numbers.

The following departments and options for bringing in revenue were discussed:

General Government

- Retirement attrition
- Vacancies
- Fees to be instituted July 1
- Job consolidation (personnel and services)

Police

- Cut to New Horizon Program
- Use of flagmen to replace officers (Not in current budget, to be reviewed for future years)

Youth, Elder and Community Services

- Fee increases (no reduction in programs or personnel)

Library

- Thursday evening closings (suggestion discussed to reduce staff rather than PM closing)
- Reduced acquisition amounts

Plant & Facilities

- Increased fees for sports field use
- Increased fees for compost site

There was a brief discussion regarding privatization of municipal cemeteries. This discussion was tabled for review next year.

NEXT MEETING

Regular Finance Committee Meeting
Wednesday, April 22, 2009
7:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT – 8:05 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carolyn Lynch
Recording Secretary

MEETING MINUTES

Finance Committee

April 8, 2009

CALL TO ORDER

Time – 7:00 P.M.

Members in attendance: Chairman Joanne F. Marden, Tim Felter, S. Jon Stumpf, Cindy Milne, Richard T. Howe, Mark Merritt, Paul Fortier and Stephen Stapinski.

Also present: Anthony J. Torrisi, Finance Director

MINUTES APPROVAL

It was moved and seconded to recommend approval of the following meeting minutes:

- A. February 11, 2009 – Passed unanimously 8-0 with corrections
- B. February 23, 2009 – Passed unanimously 8-0 with corrections
- C. February 25, 2009 – Passed unanimously as written 8-0
- D. March 2, 2009 – Passed unanimously as written 8-0
- E. March 4, 2009 – Passed unanimously as written 8-0

LETTERS TO LEGISLATORS

Mr. Howe distributed draft letters addressed to Representative Finegold, Senator Susan Tucker and Representative L'Italien for committee review and approval. Content of the letters expressed concern by Committee members over what impact reduction in state aid could have on town services. After some discussion, Mr. Howe agreed to make changes to the letters as recommended by committee members for their final signatures.

COMMUNICATIONS

TOWN ACCOUNTANT FINANCIAL REPORT

It was noted that FY2009 Estimated Receipts were down by approximately \$128,000 from FY2008. Mr. Torrisi explained that was due to an injury suffered by a police officer last year.

Licenses & Permits – Committee members asked why total percentages collected were down from the previous year. Mr. Torrisi explained that it was due to a decrease in building permits. Concern was voiced over the possibility of a more than \$600,000 budget shortfall in revenues. Ms. Marden stated to Committee members the importance of addressing the Town's serious spending issues prior to Town Meeting.

WARRANT ARTICLES

A. Town Yard Master Plan - \$30,000

Ms. Marden expressed concern over this article being put forth prematurely. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding timing of this article as well as possible options for the property in question. Tim Felter moved and Jon Stumpf seconded to recommend approval of Article P-27 Town Yard Master Plan. The motion passed 7-1-0.

B. Repairs to Private Ways

Tim Felter moved and Dick Howe seconded to recommend approval of Article P-51 Repairs to Private Ways. The motion passed unanimously 8-0.

C. Revolving Accounts

Ms. Marden informed committee members that some revolving account numbers had been amended higher since their last vote. After a brief discussion, Tim Felter moved and Dick Howe seconded to ratify the Committee's previous yes vote for P-14 Revolving Accounts. The motion passed unanimously 8-0.

D. Water System Supply Improvements

After a brief discussion, Stephen Stapinski moved and Mark Merritt seconded to recommend approval for Article P-25 Water System Supply Improvements for the amount of \$250,000. The motion passed unanimously 8-0.

BUDGET ISSUES

Ms. Marden asked committee members where they stand as a committee regarding the Town Manager's Budget. After lengthy discussion, committee members agreed they were comfortable with the Town Manager's Budget if not less, especially in light of an expected shortfall in revenue collections.

NEXT MEETING

Joint Board Meeting
Wednesday, April 13, 2009

Finance Committee Meeting
Wednesday, April 15, 2009
6:00 P.M.

Tri Board Meeting
Thursday, April 16, 2009

Finance Committee Meeting
Wednesday, April 22, 2009
7:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT – 10:05 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carolyn Lynch
Recording Secretary